

RoboRAVE brings robot fever to Northern New Mexico

April 1, 2014



Students from across Northern New Mexico excitedly competed their robots during the first RoboRAVE Rally, which took place at Northern New Mexico College in Española on March 1. The rally became a reality thanks to the efforts and partnerships of many organizations from throughout Northern New Mexico, including local colleges, businesses, and city and county government.

“Northern New Mexico’s RoboRAVE Rally was truly a community effort”, noted Janelle Vigil-Maestas of Los Alamos National Laboratory’s Community Programs Office. “A year ago having our own local rally was only an idea, suggested by the Laboratory and Inquiry Facilitators, and to look back and see what the students, teachers and the community experienced is really exciting.”

Not only was the Española event the first RoboRAVE Rally, but it also was the first time that students were able to test electronic scoring via their Smartphones or tablets and see their scores in real time.

Another first was the a-MAZE-ing track, a new wooden platform built in a complicated zig-zag pattern. To complete the track successfully, the students had to program their robots to travel 72 inches, make a 90-degree right turn, travel additional distances and then have the robots stop without falling off the track. The tracks were designed by students from the Española YMCA Teen Center.

Preparations for the rally started at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year as groups of students and teachers received their individualized training to help them learn how to program and build the robots. The training was ongoing until the week before the rally, and students facing robot challenges could receive assistance even during the event.

Participating students came from schools in Santa Fe, Peñasco, Española, and Rio Rancho. The rally in Española provided an opportunity to warm up for the [RoboRAVE International](#) event, which takes place in Albuquerque May 1 to 3 at the Albuquerque Convention Center.

“Our local RoboRAVE Rally was a great opportunity to put Española and Northern New Mexico on the robotics map, and for the world to see how amazing and intelligent our youth are,” noted Ben Sandoval, Director of the Española YMCA Teen Center.

To get a sense of what the international event will be like, watch a YouTube video of last year’s [RoboRAVE High School Line Following Finals](#).

Lab support

Events like the Northern New Mexico RoboRAVE Rally would not be possible without dedicated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) experts through the Laboratory’s Science Education Community Service Time Program. To request STEM experts for other science education events or needs, members of the community are invited to complete an online [request form](#). The form also can be accessed from the [STEM Education Programs](#) website.

An additional option for requesting Los Alamos experts and other volunteers is through the Lab’s [Vecinos Volunteer Program](#), which partners with the national [VolunteerMatch](#) effort (also see this issue’s [New app](#) story).

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